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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0523

July 14, 2003

The Honorable Gale Norton
Secretary
Department of Interior
1849 C Street, Room #6156
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Norton:

I am contacting you regarding my support for the selection of "alternative one" to protect the Gaviota Coast. I believe a local plan, absent of additional federal involvement, would better protect the unique resources of the Gaviota Coast while also acknowledging the environmental stewardship of the local community and Vandenberg Air Force Base.

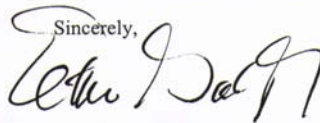
The Gaviota Coast Feasibility Study was authorized in Public Law 106-113 and studied over 215,000 acres of land along the Santa Barbara County coast for possible designation as a unit of the National Park System. I was pleased that the National Park Service recognized in its Draft Feasibility Study and Environmental Assessment that the creation of such a park would not be feasible due to lack of funds and local opposition. I now urge you to recognize that a local protection plan is still the best option for the protection of the Gaviota Coast based on the local community's strong record of environmental achievement.

Nearly half of the acres included in the study comprise Vandenberg Air Force Base. Vandenberg is a vital link in our nation's defense for launching spy satellites and developing space defenses. In addition, Vandenberg is one of the largest employers in Santa Barbara County. As you may be aware, Vandenberg has been a model in protecting the unique lands which it occupies, including providing habitat and recovery assistance for the largest single concentration of endangered snowy plovers under the jurisdiction of one federal entity. Additionally, in 2001, Vandenberg reported increased breeding populations and nest numbers among the Snow Plovers on base land.

In addition, the acres that comprise the Gaviota Coast contain not only unique coastline and open space, but also rural communities and landowners who have worked hard to protect the environmental character of the coast. It is interesting to note that on the 91,180 acres of private land included in the study, local zoning laws are already strong and limit homebuilding in some cases to one home on hundreds of acres.

It is clear to me that the Gaviota Coastal community and Vandenberg Air Force Base have worked diligently to be good environmental stewards. For this reason, I believe there is no need for additional federal involvement on the Gaviota Coast that could compromise these efforts and even negatively impact the coast's natural heritage. Instead, I believe the National Park Service should recognize the hard work of the local community and Vandenberg, and select "alternative one" which allows the entire community to develop their own protection plan using private, state or local resources.

Sincerely,



ELTON GALLEGLY
Member of Congress

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